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Captain John Gordon

"OF THE SPIES,"

With Special Reference to His Relations to Gen. Jackson in the Creek War.

Gift

OCT 12 1938

"CAPTAIN JOHN GORDON, OF THE SPIES"

Patriot, Famous Indian Scout and Fighter—His Relations to the Pioneer History of Tennessee.

(An Historica l Correction.)

By W. M. WOOLWINE.

As a history of this brave, fearless man is being prepared, the object of this paper is merely to bring out a few points in his life to show his prominence in Tennessee history, and especially his close relations with Gen. Jackson during the Creek and Florida wars.

Spence's history of Hickman County says:

"His ancestors in old Scotland never rallied around the banner of the 'Cross of fire' with more alacrity than did old Captain Jack (John) Gordon answer to the call of arms."

Capt. John Gordon was a descendant of the "Black Gordon" Clan of Scotch Highlanders, his ancestors having emigrated to this country early in the eighteenth century, and settled near Fredericksburg, Va., where he was born the 15th of July, 1763. Before attaining his majority, in company with several young men, bold and adventurous as himself, he left his Virginia home for the undeveloped West. They crossed the mountains, reached the waters of the Upper Cumberland, which they descended until they came to the point where Nashville now stands. There he made his home, entering into the hardships, dangers and adventures incident to the early settlement of Nashville and Middle Tennessee.

The first mention in history of this revered name, John Gordon, that I find is in the Southwestern Monthly Magazine, published in 1851, in the narrative of Capt. John Davis, on Indian murders around Nashville in 1791. Capt. Davis, who was a friend and fellow fighter, after referring to various incidents of those times, among which were the killing of Edwin Hickman and the wounding in the hand of James Robertson by the Indians, says: "Not long after this, the Indians drove from their camps a party of whites, who were on their way from Natchez, but fortunately none were killed. They had stopped to get breakfast, but the Indians charging upon them, captured all their luggage. The Indians were followed by a party, of which I was one, for several days; but they had got too much of a start and returned in safety. This party was commanded by Capt. John Gordon, and from the hunger experienced the tour of duty so undertaken, was known afterwards by the name of 'the Parched Corn Tour,' we having been compelled to live upon that article for several days."

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Next, Haywood, in his Civil and Political History of Tennessee, page 271 (1793: "Captain Rains and Gordon pursued a party of Indians, who had killed one Samuel Miller near Joslyn Station. After crossing Duck River, their signs were very fresh; on pursuing them seven miles further, they were overtaken. The pursuers killed some of them on the ground, took several prisoners, etc."

Next we quote from the American Historical Magazine, vol. III, page 179, the following letter, taken from the original:

"Knoxville, October 20, 1793.—Sir: A company of the Davidson Regiment heretofore called the Independent Troop, to be discontinued under that name, and in future to be a company of mounted infantry, commanded as heretofore, by Capt. John Gordon, equipped with a firelock, powder horn, shot bag, etc., to remain a part of the Regiment of Davidson County, to consist of sixty-four privates, six corporals, six seargents, two musicians. It is expected that none be received into the company, but such as hold themselves generally in readiness with good horses and arms, to pursue or repel the hostile Indians at the shortest notice to be in all respects subject to military law. (Signed.).

"WILLIAM BLOUNT."

"To Brigadier General Robertson."

Referring to the Nickojack campaign, 1794, when Col. Ore, after a council of war, determined to cross the Tennessee River, Capt. John Gordon was among the first to swim the river. Of this incident, Putnam, in his History of Middle Tennessee, says:

"The troops were landed before day. At daylight they fell into ranks, and were counted by Capt. John Gordon. The exact number who had crossed over was ascertained to be two hundred and sixty-five."

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Spence, in his history of Hickman County, says:

"Gordon's future commander, Andrew Jackson, served as a private in this expedition."

We find in Blount's journal that John Gordon was commissioned as Justice of the Peace by Gov. Blount, Sept. 25, 1794, and again on July 11, 1795. He was a member of the last County Court of the Territorial Government, which met April 16, 1796, pursuant to adjournment of this court. The last entry upon these records is in these words:

"The Court appoint John Castillian, guardian to Richard and John Lowe, for the special purpose of receiving deed of conveyance from Gen. James Robertson to said orphans, and to defend against all suits whatever that may affect the interests of said orphans. (Signed.)

"SAM BARTON,
"JAMES ROBERTSON.
"JOHN GORDON.

("N. B.—Robt. Hays is wanting.)"

John Gordon was first postmaster of Nashville, receiving his commission the first of April, 1796, and serving until Oct. 1, 1797.

On file among the original papers in the archives of the Historical Society, Nashville, we find in Box M, No. 136, an original muster roll of Capt. John Gordon's company of cavalry "called into service for the protection of the frontier or Mero District," containing forty-nine names. This is signed and certified to by John Gordon, Captn Cavalry.

In the index of the Historical Society can be found at a glance about twenty references to either John Gordon or Capt. John Gordon contained in the original papers on file. Among these were a letter from Andrew Jackson to Capt. John Gordon, dated April 3, 1819, at the Hermitage, addressed to Duck River, Old Natchez Trace Road, State of Tennessee. This letter pertained to business, but wound up with most cordial expresssions towards the family, Jackson and Gordon being great friends. These old papers refer to deeds, conveyances, and especially to contracts with the Government for supplies, etc. It seems that from the beginning of his career, about 1791, to the time of his death, 1819, he was most prominently connected with either the Territorial, State or General Government. For instance, on page 359, vol. III, American Historical Magazine, is the following letter copied from the original:

"Nashville, Sep. 26, 1795.—To Capt. John Gordon: You have been appointed by Gen. Robertson, and with my approbation, to take command and direction of the boat called the Opioaminga, on board of which is shipped by John Overton, Esq., Agent for Indian Affairs, goods consisting of calicoes, woolens, lead, powder, etc., etc., as per invoice of the same. Being a present from the President of the United States for the Chiefs and for that Nation in general. You are directed to make most speedy passage that circumstances will admit of down the Cumberland River into the Ohio and Mississippi, taking all possible care of the goods and the Indians with you, and land them safe at the Chickasaw Bluff, at which place the goods are to be delivered to the Chiefs of that Nation, or their order. The President and all good citizens of the United States, wishing to cultivate peace and harmony with all Nations, you must make the same motives actuate a like disposition in yourself, and treat the subjects and people of all nations with friendship, and particularly respect the Spaniards, their officers, and their Government. This is particularly expressed as you may meet some of that Nation in your way. You are desired likewise to recommend peace to the Chickasaws with the Creeks, and tell them their Father—the President—is desirous that the two Nations should live in harmony. The boat you will sell for the most she will fetch, and credit the United States for the same. I am, sir, with regard, your humble servant, DAVID HENLY,

"Agent for the United States."

I quote the above letter in full, as it gives an insight into the higher capacities of this great man. He not only made himself famous as the captain of spies, and an all-round Indian fighter, but he was a trustworthy man, a business man, an educated man and a diplomat.

AN HISTORICAL CORRECTION.

Our most esteemed friend, Col. A. S. Colyar, in his recent "Life of Andrew Jackson," gives the credit to one Capt. Thomas Kennedy Gordon as being the hero of the "stepping out" incident in the first mutiny of the Creek war, the bearing of Jackson's letter through the wilderness to the Governor of Pensacola, and other incidents.

In his original manuscripts, Col. Colyar says he used the name of Capt. John Gordon, but was later led to believe that it was Capt. Thomas Kennedy Gordon, changed his manuscript and so brought it out in his book. When Col. Colyar's attention was called to this, appreciating fully that justice should be done these grand old heroes, although extremely feeble, he went into the matter of investigation as far as his health would admit.

With the evidence [illegible]ore him, he wrote an article in The American of Dec. 13, 1905, which he wound up by saying, "But the evidence is in favor of Capt. Gordon."

In this same article, he also says:

"Eaton's life of Jackson, which I have, is undoubtedly reliable on such a question, and, while this book does not give the name of Capt. Gordon who stepped out, it says, 'It was Capt. Gordon of the spies.' Ramsey's History and obituary notices of Capt. John Gordon state he was Captain of the Indian Spies, and, if so, this settles it."

A little further on in this paper, a copy of the records of the War Department does, as Col. Colyar says, settle the question.

While a large and intelligent family of descendants of Capt. John Gordon are full of traditions regarding these incidents and many others equally as interesting, which will be brought out into history soon, we will ignore that entirely, except in the case of the following letter, which so closely connects the past with the present that there should be no question as to its bearing on the case.

"Nashville, Jan. 13, 1906.—Sir: From the age of 5 to that of 21 years I lived with my grandmother, Mrs. Dolly Gordon, the widow of Capt. John Gordon, of the Spies. His being the hero of the 'stepping out' incident during the mutiny of the troops, his carrying the letter from Jackson to the Governor of Pensacola, the Anderson letter incident, and his many other brave acts I heard many times from her lips. His life was full of daring incidents that became familiar household stories.

"MRS. E. D. (MARY) HICKS."

In going into this question I have tried to be impartial, and have given the same interest in looking for the names of both Thomas Kennedy Gordon and John Gordon. In my search so far I have been unable to find the name of the former in either histories of Tennessee or of Jackson. I do find, however, the following in the records of the War Department at Washington:

"The records of this office show that one Thos. K. Gordon served as a Captain in McCrory's Regiment, of West Tennessee Militia, War 1812. His name appears on a muster roll of that organization, dated at Nashville, June 8, 1813, covering the period from Oct. 4, 1813, to Jan. 4, 1814."

I also have before me the following record from the War Department:

"The records of this office show that one John Gordon served as a Captain of Mounted Spies, Tennessee Militia, War 1812. His name appears on the records of that organization, which show that he served from Sept. 24, 1813, to May 10, 1814."

The reader will note from the above that John Gordon now becomes the famous Captain of the Spies.

The position of Capt. John Gordon in Tennessee history from 1790 to 1812 is unquestioned. While historians referred to him then as in the War of 1812, frequently as "Capt. Gordon," I think the following references, taken in connection with the War Department record, which makes him "Captain of the Spies," will remove any doubt as to Capt. John Gordon's identity as the hero of the "stepping out" incident.

Eaton, in his life of Jackson, page 74, referring to the mutiny in the Creek campaign, says:

"The general dissatisfaction of the troops resulted in their determination to return. While thus pondering on the gloomy prospect, he (Jackson) lifted up his hands and exclaimed: 'If only two men will remain with me, I will never abandon the fort.' Then Capt. Gordon of the Spies facetiously replied, 'You have one, General; let's look to see if we can't find another,' and, with zeal suited to the ocasion, proceeded with some of the General's staff to raise volunteers, and in a little while succeeded in procuring one hundred and nine, who determined to remain and protect the fort."

Ramsey, in his "Annals of Tennessee," page 604, referring to an occurrence of 1793, says:

"Two companies of horsemen were incidentally paraded, one commanded by Captain John Rains, and the other commanded by Capt. John Gordon, the same who afterwards, in 1813, commanded a spy company of the Creek war."

From Headly's "Second War With England," page 26, I copy in regard to this "stepping out" incident in answer to Gen. Jackson's request:

"'You have one, General,' exclaimed Capt. Gordon of the Spies, who stood beside him."

Without reference to the "stepping out" incident, we find, in Eaton's "Life of Jackson," page 119, in regard to the second serious mutiny of Lieut. Kearly and his men, we find this order from Gen. Jackson:

"You will forthwith cause the guards to parade with Capt. Gordon's company of spies and arrest Lieut. Kearly, spare the effucion of blood, if possible; but mutiny must be put down, etc."

Again, in Waldo's History, page 114, referring to the battle of Enotochopeco, we find that the "brave Captain Gordon of the Spies" rushed from the front, endeavored to turn the flank of the enemy, in which he partially succeeded.

Eaton, writing in regard to this incident, says:

"The enemy, perceiving a strong force advancing, and being warmly assailed on their left by Capt. Gordon at the head of his company of spies, were stricken with alarm and fled."

Referring to this same incident, Clayton, in his "History of Davidson County," page 81, uses the name in full: "Captain John Gordon, an old pioneer hero."

Gen. Jackson, in his report of the battle of the Horse Shoe to Gov. Blount, March 31, 1814, says:

"A few companies of Gen. Doherty's Brigade on the right were led with great gallantry by Col. Bunch. The advance guard by the Adjutant General, Col. Eitter, and the left extremity by Captain Gordon of the Spies," etc.

On this same incident, we quote from a private letter written by Andrew Jackson to a friend, dated April 1, 1814, and published in the Nashville Whig, April 27, 1814, in which he gives an elaborate description of the battle of the Horse Shoe. In this he says:

"Capt. Gordon of the Spies, and Capt. Murry, of Gen. Johnson's Brigade, all distinguished themselves. Never was more bravery displayed; every soldier done his duty."

In Carr's "Early Times in Tennessee," to go back into history, I find the following:

"From 1790 to the close of the war, the scouts were kept out nearly all the time. Gen. Robertson had a set of brave men about Nashville. Capt. John Rains, Capt. John Gordon, and Capt. Thomas Murry were always ready at a minute's warning."

To show the "stepping out" propensity of Capt. John Gordon of the Spies, I will produce another incident of the time of 1793, referred to by Ramsey, 604. This was a battle that occurred near the Tennessee River, which is described as follows:

"The Indians had stopped at noon, and twenty men were sent forward to fire upon them. The hills were open woods, but the creek bottom was a close canebrake. Rains' men advanced to the right, while Gordon went to the left. When the advance of twenty fired, the two companies dashed forward with all speed. Gordon's company came to a high bluff of the creek, which horses could not descend. When the Captain and Joseph Brown dismounted and took down the precipice and each of them killed an Indian. The horsemen had to ride around the bluff and most of the Indians escaped into the canebrake, before they were seen, etc."

The reader will begin to note, possibly, by this time, that rushing into danger, or "stepping out," was quite a part of the nature of John Gordon. To prove that he did not "step out" at every call of danger, it must be proved that he was not on the spot. The temptations to this indomitable, fearless spirit was to "step out" on all occasions, regardless of consequences. It was irresistible. He could not help it, though he were bound by chains.

Jenkins, in his "Life of Andrew Jackson," page 78, says the mutiny occurred on the 14th day of November, 1813, and as to the answer received by Gen. Jackson, says:

"'You have one, General,' says Capt. Gordon of the Spies," etc.

I add from this same author, page 93, an interesting incident:

"Jackson had applied to Col. Milton for provisions to supply his troops. The Colonel replied that he did not feel under any obligations to furnish any to the Tennessee troops, but could lend some if necessary. Jackson instantly sent him a peremptory order by Capt. Gordon of the Spies requesting him to furnish the provisions he had previously requested. On reading the order, Col. Milton inquired of Capt. Gordon what sort of man Gen. Jackson was. 'He is a man,' replied the Captain, 'who intends when he gives an order that it shall be obeyed.'"

This was true. Jackson gave orders to be obeyed, and we are now getting far enough into the history of Capt. John Gordon to find that Jackson also knew to whom he could intrust such orders.

Now, it will be seen that the name of "Capt. Gordon of the Spies," "Captain John Gordon of the Spies," will not down from its high and worthy place in Tennessee history.

Who carried the letter from Gen. Jackson to the Spanish Governor at Pensacola?

On page 95, Jenkins says in regard to the Pensacola incident:

"Capt. Gordon was sent by Gen. Jackson in the month of August, 1814, to reconnoiter the post," etc.

Walker, in his "History of Old Hickory," page 72, says:

"In the month of August, 1814, Capt. Gordon of the Spies visited Pensacola, and ascertained that a large body of savages had been organized there by Col. Nichols of the British army."

Gen. Felix K. Zollicoffer, "sans peur," "sans reproche," a knightly knight, who married Louisa Pocahontas Gordon, the daughter of Capt. John and Dolly Gordon, was too intelligent to be mistaken

on this point so thoroughly within his reach, and too much of a gentleman to have strained a point in history to gratify family pride. In an article which I now have before me, written by Gen. Zollicoffer, in 1859, on the death of Dolly, the wife of Capt. John Gordon, he refers at length to the "stepping out" and many other incidents in the latter's life. In his own language, he says as follows in regard to the Pensacola affair:

"It was Capt. Gordon who performed that memorable and perilous service of penetrating alone a forest 300 miles from Hickory Grounds to Pensacola, encountering and evading various Indian parties, and procuring for Gen. Jackson that valuable knowledge of Spanish fortifications and of the Spanish complicity with British and Indian enemies which at once determined him upon and gave him the key to the famous capture of Pensacola."

"Clayton, page 81, says:

"The bearer of the dispatches was Capt. John Gordon who with a single companion undertook the dangerous and seemingly desperate mission. At the end of the first day's journey, the companion of Capt. Gordon became so much appalled by the prospects ahead that the Captain drove him back and continued his mission alone. After many difficulties and dangers from the hostile Creeks, he reached Pensacola. On his arrival he was surrounded by a large body of Indians, and it was by the greatest presence of mind that he escaped instant death and reached the Commandant. His mission being ended, he returned as he came, and reached Gen. Jackson in safety."

Jenkins, on page 73, as we have seen, refers to "Capt. Gordon of the Spies," and on page 95, referring to this incident, says Capt. Gordon was sent by Gen. Jackson in the month of August, 1814, to reconnoiter the post.

Walker, in his "History of Old Hickory," page 72, corroborates the above, saying:

"In the month of August, 1814, Capt. Gordon of the Spies visited Pensacola, and ascertained that a large body of savages had been organized there by Col. Nichols of the British Army."

As to the hero of the "stepping out" incident, Parton refers to him as "one Capt. Gordon of whom we will hear more hereafter." In his "Life of Jackson," page 505, he writes of this incident as follows:

"General Jackson wrote to Maurequez, the Governor of Pensacola. This letter (1814) he entrusted to Captain Gordon, the famous eccentric Spy Captain of the Creek War who was empowered to converse with the Governor and directed to obtain explicit information of his designs. Captain Gordon proceeded alone to Pensacola, where he saw the British fleet in the harbor, the British flag floating from the fort. Col. Nichols quartered with the Governor, Capt. Woodbine drilling his ridiculous regiment of Indians in the Public Square, and Governor Marequez on the most cordial footing with his new friends. The latter potentate was at first inclined to dismiss Capt. Gordon without deigning any reply, but after detaining the ambassador for some days, he concluded to bestow upon the impertinent and peremptory Gen. Jackson, an epistle that should finally quench him."

The reader will note again from the above letter that Capt. John Gordon was empowered to converse with the Governor and acted as an Ambassador—another illustration of the breadth and capacity of this great man.

The following letters, which I copy from the originals now before me, form interesting links in connecting Capt. John Gordon with both the Creek and Florida wars, and emphasize his relations to the incidents above referred to. The first letter is addressed to Capt. John Donaldson, Pensacola, Fla., Jan. 14, 1818, and reads as follows:

"Dear Jack: I have been ordered to repair to Ft. Scott, assume command of the forces, make requisitions from the adjacent States for such forces as may be necessary to give peace and safety to the Southwestern frontier. I have made a call on my own patriots, who followed me into the fields of Talladega, Emuckfau, and Enotochopeco. . . . . .

"I have wrote Captain Gordon to join me at Ft. Scott and take command of the Spy Company. I will thank you to write me fully by Capt. Gordon. (Signed).

"ANDREW JACKSON."

The above letter was handed down to us among Capt. John Gordon's papers, it being evidently turned over to him by John Donaldson. The letter that Gen. Jackson wrote to Capt. John Gordon cannot be found, but the following is sufficient proof of his having received the letter:

Addressed: "To Mrs. Dolly Gordon, Hickman County, Tenn. Sent by hand of Capt. Donaldson. Fort Jackson, Mar. 2, 1818.—Dear Dolly: I hardly know what to write under present circumstances, as my mind is divided between duty, inclination, and interest. I have received in Pensacola a letter from Genr. Jackson requesting me to accompany him on an expedition against the Seminations in E. Floridy. The knowledge I have received while in Pensacola seems to make it necessary that I should go on, therefore have concluded to do so, relying on your care and presence at home. I would recommend you to go on with the building if possible, and will try to keep you in funds. As to farming you are to be governed by circumstances. I did think of putting the Briley field in cotton, but of that you will be the best judge. My orchard and vines will be worthy of your attention, and should you be at a loss about the construction of our house, I would recommend that the front should be as follows (viz) The door into the small room to turn against the partition, the other as near the center of the large room as possible. The windows to be placed on each side the front door of the large room, and on the right of the door of the small room to be placed to correspond with three windows in the upper story at regular distances from each other. The back door of the small room to open against the partitions also. The rest I leave with yourself.

"Reasons that will be too tedius to mention has governed me on this occasion, therefore hope you will wait for further reasons on the subject. I shall expect to hear from you as soon as pos-

He spelled the word possible-posable. in this letter wm. W

able, which will be by directing your letters to Genr Jackson's headquarters, E. Floridy. I have no doubt but the boys will be attentive in all things relating to our common interest, therefore, will call their attention to the law-suits. The depositions of Mansker and Smith in the case of Martin (vs) Gordon was taken before one magistrate only, therefore it becomes necessary that J. Whitesides should be consulted whether it should not be taken again, or that the suit be protracted, and Mr. Balsh consulted and his counsel followed in all the cases in which he has been employed—I know of nothing else at present to call your attention, but you keep up a regular correspondence which I promise on my part. I have had an agreeable visit to Pensacola and Paddy and myself are both in good health, and hope you and the family are the same.

"I am Dear Dolly, your affectionate husband, JOHN GORDON."

The above letter is copied literally. It speaks for itself. It indicates education above the average of his contemporaries, shows his high sense of duty, and gives an insight into his business qualification.

SOME INCIDENTS IN HIS LIFE.

One day after the wars were over, a party of gentlemen were discussing the past at the old Nashville Inn. Jackson heard a man among them, whom he did not know, soundly berating and abusing his friend, Col. W. P. Anderson, Jackson quietly wrote down the various charges, and after the man had gotten through his tirade, he approached him and asked him to sign the paper. This the accuser refused to do, saying that while he would stand by it, he would not sign any paper. Jackson, who was now quite irate over the matter, turning to Capt. Gordon, rehearsed it to him, and asked his advice as to what he should do about it. Gordon read the charges very carefully, and, expressing great surprise that the man would not sign it, said: "General, this paper has so much truth in it that it should be signed, and if that man won't do it, I will sign it myself." This story is worn threadbare by rehearsal in Capt. John Gordon's family, and I do not hesitate to say that this Gordon was none other than Capt. John Goruon of the Spies.

I add also a companion story to this. While Jackson's army was once resting, a report was circulated through the camp that a certain party, a special friend of Gen. Jackson's, on a certain occasion, had shown the "white feather." This came to Jackson's ears, which very much enraged him. He took this trouble to his friend, Capt. John Gordon, and said that he would cowhide the man that said it. "I said it—I say it, General; I know it!" replied Gordon, whereupon Jackson said, "Oh, Gordon, Gordon—I would as soon smite my wife!" and turned away.

As seen heretofore in the Nickajack expeditions, John Gordon was a Captain and Andrew Jackson a private. Many years later, when they were trying to march against the Creek Indians, things were somewhat changed, Jackson having become the superior officer. Before marching from Fayetteville, Jackson was giving his men an outline of the plan of march, and Capt. John Gordon, for the moment forgetting the difference, presumed to interrupt and offer his views as to the best route. Jackson became very angry, and said, with an oath, that he (Gordon) should be reduced to the ranks. Whereupon Gordon laid down his arms, and said he would not march with the expedition at all. But his services were so valued by Gen. Jackson that the latter later apologized and restored him to his title.

On a wet, chilly night, during one of the Indian campaigns, owing to the surrounding dangers, Gen. Jackson gave orders that there should be no fires in camp. During the night a fire in one portion of the camp was reported to Jackson. A messenger was immediately sent to find out who it was that built the fire, and to ask for the sword of the officer who permitted it. Capt. John Gordon himself was found luxuriating in the warmth of the fire. He handed over his sword, saying that if he (Gordon) was not afraid to have this fire, he did not see why Gen. Jackson should be. Jackson relented and sent word to Gordon to come and get his sword, whereupon he said, "Gen. Jackson took my sword, and if he wants me to have it, let him send it back to me," which Jackson did. The party who took the sword from Gordon doubtless was a little lacking in diplomacy, rather peremptory, perhaps, in his manner. However that may be, he was given permanent leave of absence, and advised by Jackson to get out of camp as quickly as possible.

Jackson, as history shows, often took matters in his own hands, and was at times most heady and recalcitrant. What a kinship linked the spirits of these two heroes! How he must have, and did, love and honor this high-strung, fiery, fearless man.

I have selected only a few of these treasured stories, and will close this part of my subject with the following:

One night during the troublous times of Indian uprisings, Dolly Gordon was aroused from her peaceful slumber to find her husband, Capt. John Gordon, out of bed and in the act of striking a light. On questioning him, he said: "I have just had a vivid dream that there is an uprising of the Indians, and that Jackson needs me," seeming much concerned over the dream. He returned to bed, however, and fell asleep. Again his wife was roused from her sleep, this time to find him dressing. Asking him again the trouble, he said that he had the same dream again, and, notwithstanding her earnest protestations that it was only a dream and of no significance, he was so impressed with the idea that Jackson did need him that he hurrfedly got ready, and was soon on horseback on his way post haste. After riding some distance, he met a courier coming under whip with a message from Jackson, asking him to come to him quickly, and confirming his dream in regard to the uprising.

In regard to his noble wife, Dolly Cross, who was born in Nottaway County, Virginia, July 15, 1779, a descendant of Pocahontas, and the daughter of Richard Cross, one of the very earliest settlers of Nashville, the following from the article written by Gen. Zollicoffer, heretofore referred to, will be appropriate and interesting:

"She was always remarkable for her charity, kindness and Christian spirit, and in the midst of the canebrakes, upon the borders of the war paths, the dear wife and mother, remained alone, nurturing her little children, while the stout-hearted husband and father was afar, driving back the ruthless enemies of his country to the utmost borders of their own stronghold. His character (her husband's) as a citizen, soldier, was not more illustrious than was hers as a Christian wife and mother."

Capt. John Gordon moved from Nashville to his farm at Duck River Ferry, Hickman County, in 1812. Messrs. Spence, in their history of Hickman County, which is pronounced most reliable by

critics, have a great deal to say of old Captain Jack (John) Gordon. Speaking of the home he built, they say: "This much dilapidated building was for years the most elegant home in Hickman County. Here lived the most aristocratic family of the county. This old home is in ruins, and where once was grandeur, gloom now is."

Jackson wanted to promote Capt. John Gordon, but where could he find a man to fill his place? Gordon cared nothing for promotion. His only pride was duty, his only goal was danger; and promotion to him meant nothing, unless accompanied with opportunity for greater deeds of daring, and this promotion could not give.

Physically, he was small, rather below the medium size, strong and wiry, with keen black eyes. The only claim he ever made for himself was that he knew not the sensation of fear, which is plainly shown in every act of his life.

The most striking characteristic of this unusual man was the unaffected simplicity of his patriotism. To him his daring deeds were merely matters of simple duty —they needed no applause. Studying his character, you fully realize this in drawing a comparison between him and men, not only of his time, but of all times, who, after doing some heroic deed, become spoiled, self-inflated, and posing in the light of public notoriety are led into various ambitions, especially political.

There was nothing stagy or spectacular in his life. At every call he went forth from his home to the highest point of danger. When his work of death and destruction to the enemies of his country was accomplished, he unassumingly returned to the quietude of his beloved home and family, following with the same energy, vigor and success the peaceful pursuits of life.

His name and deeds should be written on tablets of bronze, and preserved as a shinging example for coming generations.

I will close with the following tribute from the pen of Judge Haywood:

"Capt. Gordon was a brave and active officer, distinguished through life for a never-failing presence of mind, as well as for the purest integrity and independence of principle. He had much energy both of mind and body, and was in all, or nearly all, the expeditions from Tennessee which were carried on against the Indians, or other enemies of the country, and in all of these was conspicuous for these qualities. He now sleeps with the men of other times, but his repose is guarded by the affectionate recollection of all who knew him."

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"CAPTAIN JOHN GORDON OF THE SPIES"

By W. M. WOOLWINE

ARTICLE II.

In my last paper on Capt. John Gordon, with the evidence then before me, I was led to believe that he came directly from his home, Fredericksburg, Va., to Nashville; but I have just found a brief outline of his history written by his son, Bolling Gordon, who died in 1880, which shows that he stopped for some years in Kentucky. I quote verbatim the following from this sketch of the famous warrior:

"Every family should endeavor to know something of their ancestral history. The family of Gordons are descended from the Scotch, and came to America some years previous to the American Revolution, and settled near Fredericksburg, Va., where John Gordon, the subject of this sketch was born. His paternal grandfather"—(Here a part of the original sheet has been torn off, and leaves a most unfortunate break in the history of his ancestors). "At an early age, he left his family and friends and wended his way to Kentucky, first locating near where what is now known as Maysville, on the Ohio River.

"About this time the Indians became troublesome, and the few settlers who had located themselves in the country had to construct forts and blockhouses for their protection against Indian depredations. For several years, difficulties beset them on every side, laboring on the one hand to guard against the foe, and on the other against those hardships and privations, incident to the planting of a new colony in a new and distant land. At that time there was but little intercourse with the Mother State, Virginia. The little trade carried on then was with the French, who at that time occupied Ft. Pitt, now known as Pittsburg. This trade was chiefly in skins, furs, and peltries of different kinds. The chief subsistence for a few years was the flesh of buffalo, elk and deer, with which the country then abounded.

"After several years' residence among the toils and difficulties referred to, and after participating in many bloody conflicts, among them that of Blue and Bullitt's Lick encounter with the Indians, a new and more enticing field for the courage and daring of John Gordon opened in the new settlements beyond, that were then forming in the territory south of the Ohio River, now Tennessee, in what was at that time called 'the Cumberland settlement.' The principal little settlements that were then forming, composed mainly of North Carolinians and Virginians, were made at the French Lick, now Nashville, and on Drake and Mansker Creeks, now in Sumner County.

"The early settlers here, as in Kentucky had every hardship and privation to encounter. Surrounded on the one hand by numerous savages, and on the other by wild beasts almost equally ferocious.

"On reaching his new destination on the Cumberland, possessed only of his rifle and the usual implements of the backwoodsman he was at once prepared to blend his fortune with those among whom he had located. Here, as in Kentucky, everything was rude and uncultivated, civilization having done but little to ameliorate the condition of the settlers. After this the settlement at or near what is now known as Nashville, were much annoyed by marauding bands of Indians, principally of the Cherokee and Creek tribes—the Chickasaws, the nearest tribe, being generally friendly. Many families had to lament the loss of wives and children, some murdered, some scalped and left for dead on the ground, and many taken prisoners and carried into captivity.

"Scenes of woe and anguish like these did not fail to enlist every true and chicalrous spirit in their defense, and among the number, no one was more ready to come to their aid than Capt. John Gordon. Besides the many forays with the Indians on their retreat from the settlements with prisoners and property, his courage was no less displayed in the regular campaigns gotten up against them.

"After the expeditions against the Indians at Coldwater, now Tuscumbia, Ala., in which he participated, a last and final termination was put to hostilities by the expedition to Nickajack on the Tennessee River. In this expedition (September, 1794) Capt. Gordon commanded a company, who in connection with several hundred others, swam the Tennessee River in the night, and on the succeeding day, put the enemy to flight, after killing many of their warriors.

"Some years previous to this, about 1786, during a temporary lull in warfare in Tennessee, Capt. Gordon concluded to visit some relations residing in Georgia. On the way thither he had to pass through the Creek nation, and on reaching McGillavray's town, he was taken a prisoner by the Creeks, then in hostility with the Georgians, who tied him to a tree, and gave him about a hundred lashes, with an assurance that if he had come later in the season, they would have taken his scalp. Though gratified at getting off so well, under the circumstances, yet he did not fail to avenge himself of them as will be seen hereafter.

"On reaching Georgia, then about twenty-three years old, he went to school to a gentleman by the name of Nicholson for the period of about three months, being the only schooling he ever received. During this time, he learned the elements of the English education, together with a pretty fair knowledge of Algebra, Geometry and Trigonometry. With this slight preparation for entering into the business concerns of life, he returned to Nashville, where after a few years of active employment in mercantile pursuits, aided by the means and influence of a valued friend, Mr. William Tate, a Scotch merchant, who then resided there, and for many years afterward, he succeeded in making a competent beginning on which he built a better estate in after life.

"On the 15th day of July, 1794, he married Dolly Cross, daughter of Richard Cross, of Nashville. They had seven sons—John, Fielding, William, Bolling, Powhatan, Richard and Andrew—and three daughters—Mary, Dorothy and Louisa. The oldest daughter, Dolly, married first, Charles W. Wilber, and after his death, Augustus Sowell. The second, Mary, married Reuben F. White, while the third, Louisa Pocahontas, married Gen. Felix K. Zollicoffer, who fell at the battle of Mill Spring, Kentucky, in defense of the rights of the people of the Southern

"At the breaking out of the Creek war, in 1813, Capt. John Gordon was invited by Gen. Andrew Jackson to accompany him on the expedition against that tribe of Indians. The position of 'Captain of the Spies' was the only position he would accept, being unwilling to be commanded by any other officer than the Commanding General. He was permitted by the General to select his men from the whole army, the object being to get men of mature age, good physical constitution, and of undaunted courage. Many of his men were his contemporaries in the days when Nashville was invaded by the Cherokees and Creeks.

"The duties mainly performed by his company were of the most dangerous and hazardous character, being always on the scout and in advance of the army.

"The company participated in all the battles of the Creek war, closing with that of the Horseshoe on the Tallapoosa River. After this battle was fought, the remaining portion of the Spanish authorities at Pensacola, Gen. Jackson being unwilling to evacuate and fall back with his forces, sought to get instructions from the War Department to pursue them into Florida."

The outline of his history by his son, Bolling Gordon, ends as above. It was doubtless continued, but if so the papers have been lost.

Capt. John Gordon was a most methodical man, as is shown by the many papers of real estate deals and various transactions that he left at his desk. One of his youngest children is known to have carelessly destroyed a number of his papers, not knowing their value. In each incident of his life we see the rigid will power of John Gordon, and it is following in a straight line, without a selfish thought the simple path of duty, the most hazardous he could find. His terms with Gen. Jackson in the Creek War, as seen above, were that he would only accept the position of "Commander of the Spies," and further that he would be subordinate to no one other than Gen. Jackson himself. Selecting his men from the whole army as permitted by Gen. Jackson, he must have had a glorious set of daring men around him.

John Gordon being born in 1763, and going to Georgia at the age of 23, shows that he came to French Lick, now Nashville, some time prior to 1786. We find in Capt. John Davis' narrative that he was Captain of a company in 1791. In the Tennessee Historical Society we find the original muster roll of a company commanded by him, and disbanded on the 8th day of September, 1793. The following paper, copied from the original, shows that he continued to serve as Captain until the State of Tennessee was formed in ~~1793~~ 1796.

"William Blount, Governor in and Over the Territory of the United States, South of the Ohio River.—To all Who Shall See These Presents, Greeting:

"Know ye that reposing special trust and confidence in the patriotism, valor, conduct and fidelity of John Gordon, of the county of Davidson, I do hereby appoint him a Captain of mounted infantry to form a part of the regiment of said county, and do hereby authorize and empower him to execute and fulfill the duties of a Captain of mounted infantry in the said regiment, agreeable to the law, and the rules and regulations of military discipline, and to have and to hold the rank and command of Captain of mounted infantry in said regiment during his good behavior or the existence of the temporary government of the said territory with all the powers, privileges and emoluments thereto of the right appertaining.

"Given under my hand and seal in the said Territory, this 20th day of October, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-three. (Signed) WM. BLOUNT."

In addition to his being continually connected with the military and fighting Indians at every opportunity during these times, he was successfully carrying on business in Nashville. His business relations with William Tait were set forth in Bowling Gordon's paper, and in addition to that I have before me the original contract of partnership formed in Nashville in 1794 between him and one B. Allison, "for the purpose of merchandising" under the firm name of "John Gordon & Co."

We find the original deeds to many pieces of property made over to him during the nineties of the eighteenth century. It is interesting to note the descriptions of property contained in these deeds; and it would be quite difficult to locate them now as the boundary lines have so changed in the many years elapsing since. The old Spanish oaks, locusts, etc., have long since vanished away and given place to other corners now familiar to the present generation.

From the time of his appearance in history up till his death in 1819 he seemed to have had the special confidence of the General Government, and, besides his fighting record many are the transactions of his furnishing rations and provisions for the regular army.

One of the interesting deals in his life was with the famous Indian chief, Gen. William Colbert. From the original paper I quote the following contract, made of greater interest by the witnesses to the same:

"A Bargain Between William Colbert and John Gordon for Duck River.

"First, Colbert was to put Gordon in possession of the place with all the houses and craft as the Federal troops delivered them.

"Secondly, said Colbert was to furnish a negro man, and afford protection to all property taken to Duck River by said Gordon for the use of the place, and in case of spoliation or accident Colbert is to bear his proportional part, and Gordon is privileged to clear and cultivate what lands he thought proper for the use of the place, and to enjoy the same privilege, and his son, John, after him in conjunction with Colbert's son, Jamison.

"The said Gordon is to lay in all utensils and supplies necessary for the place, to furnish a book and employ such person as appeared necessary for carrying on the business for the benefit of the place; he is to keep an account of all expenditures and income, and when the stock in trade and all contingent expenses were paid, then the neat (net) profits were to be equally divided between the said Colbert and Gordon at such time as the parties should think it convenient."

The foregoing contract was explained to Gen. Colbert by his interpreter, and agreed to by him before us the subscribers, this 14th day of February, 1804.

(Signed) "ANDREW JACKSON.
"JOHN M'NAIRY.
"WILLIAM T. LEWIS.
"JAS. ROBERTSON."

After the ceding of these lands by the Indians, the improvements at Duck River Crossing and a large body of land was granted to him as a reward for his meritorious conduct and his valuable services in the many hazardous expeditions and sorties against the Indians, in which he had engaged continuously whenever needed throughout his life.

In connection with the partnership between Gordon and Colbert, I quote a well told and interesting incident from an article published some time since by Col. George C. Porter, now Superintendent of the State Capitol.

"THE MAN FROM CHAPEL HILL."

"During the existence of this unique partnership, between John Gordon and Colbert—the Saxon and the Chickasaw—there appeared upon the scene a young stranger from North Carolina. He had left her famous university, Chapel Hill, before the completion of his course of study, full of ambition and hope, but limited in means, influence and funds, he had made his way to the great West in search of fame and fortune. After a few days of recuperation at Nashville, he continued his journey further to the West until he came to the trading post of Gordon and Colbert, then on the outer limit of the advance of the white man. Here he halted for a few days seeking employment. Gordon and Colbert became cognizant of the fact. Dromgoole, their chief clerk and manager, wished to resign his position, and after some parley and negotiation, the same was offered to and accepted by this young adventurer, who immediately entered upon the duties and responsibilities attached. These were both arduous and varied, and might well have shaken the confidence of one far more experienced in trade and commerce than himself. However, under his management the business of the firm succeeded and prospered, as it never had before. Complete satisfaction was given both to proprietors and customers, all declaring that for cleverness and tact, none had surpassed this young manager from the East.

"Little did these employers and their customers think that this young stripling then engaged in casting up accounts and collecting moneys, dusting shelves, making fires and bringing water, measuring calico and domestic for the lady and the squaw; dishing out sugar and salt, whisky and tobacco for the emigrant and the resident; exchanging beads and trinkets for the skins of the otter and the beaver, fishing with the natives on Sunday, was in process of time he developed into one of the most remarkable men and enlightened statesmen of his day—the equal of Clay and Webster and Calhoun in logic and debate; their superior in energy, industry and determination, in the skill and science of legislation, in statistics and governmental lore; who was to wrestle with Jackson in deadly conflict on the floor of a Nashville hotel; and then, after a reconciliation, not unlike that which took place between Brutus and Cassius, Oliver and Roland, Roderick Dhu and James Fitzjames, was to become his chief supporter and defender on the floor of the American Congress, making possible his ultimate vindication before the people for the issuance of his 'Specie Circular,' and his arbitrary removal of the deposits, who was to become the author and finisher of the Expunging Resolution; whose single speech was to settle the Oregon boundary question and avert a war with England, and who was to be the chief Senatorial annihilator of Old Nic Biddle and his bank.

"Yet such was the case, for it was none other than the great Thomas H. Benton in fieri—a man without a model and without a shadow, who could wield indifferently the detecting spear of Ithuriel, or the victorious sword of Michael."

A singular coincidence in regard to dates occurs in the lives of John Gordon and his wife, Dolly. He was born on the 15th of July, 1763; she on the 15th of July, 1779. They were married on the 15th of July, 1794, she being 15 years of age.

He lived on Cedar street, Nashville, at one time, near the grounds now occupied by the Capitol, and owned Capitol Hill, which he is said to have sold for a horse and saddle.

Of his family, one writer says: "It was a remarkable family of children, who filled with credit their several stations in life, and well sustained their splendid lineage. William held a Captain's position in the regular army; he died in 1834. Powhatan was Captain in the Seminole War, and won distinction for courage and bravery in the War with Mexico; he died in 1879." Ex-Gov. James D. Porter writes of his son, Bolling, as follows: "Col. Bolling Gordon was a familiar acquaintance and a friend of mine. I made his acquaintance in my early manhood. He was then a leading citizen of Tennessee. He had served in both branches of the Legislature of the State. I served with him as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1870. He had served as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1834, and had always been one of our foremost citizens. I am proud to have enjoyed his friendship."

Col. A. S. Colyar, who failed to use the name of John Gordon in his recent life of Jackson, while resting in Florida, after going thoroughly and carefully over all the evidence, now writes as follows:

"Feb. 24, 1906.—My Dear Mrs. Woolwine: I have your letter in referenec to the mistake I made in writing 'The Life and Times of Jackson,' in which I gave Capt. Thomas Kennedy Gordon credit, as the Captain of the spies in the Indian Wars of 1812 and 1815. I wish to say it was a mistake. . . .

"This I greatly regret, as I now know from full investigation that the soldier known as 'Captain of the Spies' was Capt. John Gordon. (Signed.)

"A. S. COLYAR."

My object in collecting data and producing these papers is to preserve the sacred memory for the benefit of future generations of one of the noblest, most heroic and daring men of all pioneer times. It is not I, but the stubborn facts of history that estaablishes beyond the shadow of a doubt that John Gordon was "Captain of the Spies," and was the one hero of the many incidents accredited by historians to the Captain of the Spies. Especially, in the Creek War do we find him engaged in every battle fought, and always at the very highest point of danger, the chiefest of the great lieutenants of Gen. Andrew Jackson.

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